

Gospel Lesson for Older Children

Scripture: Matthew 25:1-13

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry in the world and our call to engage in that mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time coming from the word "ordinal" which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The color for this season is green and it is often referred to as the green growing time as we hear stories of what God is calling us to do in the world, we join in that call, and we grow in our faith.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Jesus is now finished with the confrontations and moved on to talking about preparing for what is ahead. This parable warns of what happens when one does not prepare for something you know is going to happen.

In that culture, weddings were a bit different than they are in our culture. The bridegroom, his family and guests would gather in their house, the bride, her family and guests would gather at their house. When they were ready, the groom and his family would make their way to the bride's house. Upon their arrival, the groom would take his bride inside the house to consummate the marriage, and they were then married. After the bride and groom join their family and guests again, the party would begin.

This being the case, there was not a definite start time, but you knew it was going to happen on a given day or the day after. You were to prepare and stay prepared and be ready for the celebration that ensued after the marriage took place.

Our lesson for Matthew today is saying that the kingdom of heaven is like this. How so? For Matthew's community, it was about being immediately

ready for Christ to come back and not to fall asleep on watch. 2000+ years later, the message is still to be ready, but in a slightly different way. The kingdom of heaven is both in the future and in the present. The kingdom of heaven is happening now – so how are we prepared? How are we sustaining our life of faith and lighting our lamps with extra oil to show the world who God is?

Theme: Be Prepared

Before: You will need copies of the Scripture for today. You will also need copies of the PACE sheets from below (stapled together), markers, pens, pencils, and bags to put the scavenger hunt items into.

Note: If you are doing the scavenger hunt, make sure you let the church staff and volunteers know the children will be out of the room for a short period of time.

Beginning: Welcome the children into the room and have them sit in your gathering area. Ask how their week was and what they had to do to get ready to come to church.

Opening Prayer: *God, we come together today to learn more about you and how we can be prepared to follow you each and every day. Be with us as we hear your word and discover more about you. Amen.*

The Story: Matthew 25:1-13

In the Bible we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us, they eat and sleep, go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories we learn that God’s plan is for each of us too.

Note: Since the concept of wedding preparation and weddings from this culture may be new to the children, you may want to read the second paragraph from the “Notation” section above to explain a bit about the parable they are going to hear. You can do that before or after reading the Scripture.

Read Matthew 25:1-13.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what you liked about today's Scripture?
- Are there things you have questions about?
- I wonder what Jesus' parable means?
- What could it be telling us today?
- I wonder what words seemed important to you?
- I wonder what this might have to do with us as people of God?

Prepare: PACE

As we heard in our lesson from today, it is important to be prepared. How many of you have ever gone on a trip? What are the things that you do to prepare for a trip? Do you pack anything? Allow the children time to respond.

Today, we are going to think about ways that we can be prepared each day as we walk with God as our guide. We don't want to get caught with our lamps out!

Here is one way that you can connect with God – you can keep on PACE. To keep on PACE, you need to:

- Pray each day
- Act as God calls you to
- Connect with others
- Engage with needs around you

Each of you will get a sheet with those words written at the top. Take some time in small groups to talk about how you might do each of these things and then write or draw your response as to how you might keep PACE in order to stay prepared on your journey with God.

Split them into small groups and let them have a go. Circulate around the room to see if they need any help getting their creative juices going.

How are we Preparing?

How does our church prepare us? Have the children brainstorm how we might prepare and be ready for the Kingdom of Heaven. (prayer, doing acts of justice, taking care of others, reading Scripture, showing God to others)

Once they have a good list of things, have them go on a scavenger hunt around the church and find things that help us be constantly prepared for how God comes into our lives. Make sure they work in teams of three or more for safety reasons. Give them a time limit.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to clean up their space. Invite them to share what they have created or if you have done the scavenger hunt, have them share what they found and how it prepares them for God being in their lives.

Closing Prayer: *Gracious God, We thank you for our time together today. Help us to be constantly preparing and ready for you in our lives. Be with us as we go into the world to do your work that we will be ready, with lamps lit when you come among us. Amen.*

Matthew 25:1-13

Jesus said, "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied,

‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

Written by the Rev. Shannon Kelly

Pray each day

Act as God calls you to

Connect with others

Engage with the needs
around you